



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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ALABAMA MAN SENTENCED TO 20 YEARS FOR ILLEGAL TRAFFIC IN WILDLIFE

An Alabama man has been sentenced to 20 years in prison following his conviction on three felony counts stemming from an assault on a Federal wildlife officer, illegal sale of deer meat, and drug violations. The sentence is the longest ever imposed for a conviction on a Federal wildlife-related charge.

Russell Lee Harris of Brewton, Alabama, was sentenced in Mobile Federal District Court to 10 years in prison for assaulting a Federal wildlife officer and five years for violations involving the Federal Lacey Act, which prohibits the interstate movement of wildlife or wildlife parts taken illegally in the States. It is illegal in Alabama to sell any part of a wild deer. Harris was also sentenced to another five years for sale of marijuana. Federal District Court Judge Emmett Cox stipulated that the five-year sentence for the drug charge and the 10-year sentence for assaulting an officer be served consecutively.

Harris' sentence was the most severe to be handed down as a result of an extensive undercover investigation conducted by State and Federal wildlife law enforcement officials, which concluded last March with the arrest of 30 persons. During the investigations, undercover agents bought over two and a half tons of illegal deer meat, as well as 80 gallons of moonshine whisky and 52 pounds of marijuana.

(over)

The stiff sentence for the assault charge was the maximum permitted for assault with a deadly weapon. Since the enactment of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, there have been more than 250 assaults on Federal wildlife enforcement officers engaged in official duty. This is the first time the maximum prison sentence has been imposed.

Twelve other persons received one-year suspended sentences and two years probation, during which time they may not hunt, and fines ranging from \$500 to \$1500. The fines totaled \$10,950. Federal charges were dismissed for five men who will be prosecuted in State court. One case was dismissed with five years active probation, and two cases are still pending.

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